

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



Serious house fires a warning to us all

Tuesday, 31 August 2010

The Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) says recent serious house fires where families have narrowly escaped with their lives, serve as a warning to us all.

Fires caused by cooking mishaps, dirty lint filters in clothes dryers, unclean or damaged flues, unguarded fireplaces and portable heaters left too close to combustibles, have forced families to evacuate their homes without warning.

MFS Community Safety District Officer, Allan Foster says **South Australia is expecting a cold, wet spring, meaning the risk of potentially deadly house fires caused by home heating measures, remains very high.**

“In New South Wales, four lives were recently lost in house fires in four days. It is a situation that could, unfortunately, happen here in South Australia.”

“One of the most concerning things our fire investigators have found this winter, is that several individuals and families haven’t had working smoke alarms or a Home Fire Escape Plan. In some cases, this has almost cost lives,” he says.

Mr Foster says what’s also disturbing, is the number of families who deadlock themselves into their homes and don’t leave the keys in the lock, potentially trapping themselves in the event of a fire.

“Reliable, working smoke alarms that are less than 10 years old, combined with a practised Home Fire Escape Plan provides people with the best chance of surviving a house fire,” Mr Foster says.

The MFS warns that people lose their sense of smell when they sleep, and are less likely to wake without working smoke alarms to alert them if there is a fire.

By following some simple tips, you can be **home fire safe** during colder weather:

- Keep heaters well clear from any items that might burn. Clearance from clothes, bedding, furniture, curtains and other combustibles should be two metres.
- Fixed heating equipment must be installed and maintained by a qualified tradesperson, in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Choose portable electric heaters with automatic safety switches that turn the heater off if it’s tipped over. Never leave portable heaters on in bedrooms overnight.
- Do not use portable electric heaters in wet areas to avoid the possibility of electric shock.
- Children and pets must be supervised when heaters are in use.
- Always use a fire screen in front of open fires and close wood stove door(s).
- Flues and chimneys should be cleaned once a year to prevent a build up of flammable material.
- Ensure only approved fuel is used in liquid-fuelled heaters.
- Clean the lint filter in your clothes dryer every time you use it.
- Keep the oven and stove top clean, and when cooking roasts and casseroles, always use a timer to remind you to turn the appliance off.

For more information on home fire safety, please visit the [MFS website](#)

For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.
Country callers 1300 737 637.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au